

The Wall Street Journal and the US electoral crisis

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11 November 2000

There is no more devastating exposure of the legal and constitutional pretenses of Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush than the editorial published November 10 by his most vociferous supporter, the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* brazenly entitles its piece “A Gore Coup d’Etat?” and proceeds to stand reality on its head, accusing the Gore campaign of trying to steal the US election.

The editorial is the *Journal's* response to the previous day's announcement by spokesmen for Al Gore that the Democratic campaign would support legal challenges to the disputed vote in Florida, whose 25 electoral votes are the margin of victory for one or the other candidate.

The *Journal* insists that the national election should be decided simply by a cursory recount in the pivotal state, combined with a tally of overseas absentee ballots to be completed by November 17. The fact that a recanvass of voting machines has already reduced Bush's Florida margin—out of 6 million votes cast statewide—from the 1,725 announced on election day to a mere 327, and that several thousand votes in the Democratic stronghold of Palm Beach County were miscast and another 19,000 discarded because of a deceptive ballot should not be taken into account. Nor should allegations by minority voters in other parts of the state of intimidation by the police and election authorities, and numerous reports of ballot boxes gone astray (in a state run by Bush's brother and notorious for past ballot-rigging).

In particular, the *Journal* denounces Gore for employing “squads” of “political lawyers” to “force the people of this country into an unprecedented political crisis.” This comes from a newspaper that engaged in a non-stop campaign, employing the most sordid and provocative measures, to destabilize the Clinton administration with the aim of driving it from

office by means of a pseudo-constitutional coup.

The *Journal's* modus operandi included slander and character assassination. In the early months of the first Clinton administration it targeted for special attack long-time Clinton associate and Justice Department official Vincent Foster. The *Journal's* witch-hunt was a factor in Foster's suicide, but that did not stop the *Journal* editors from cranking out articles suggesting that the Clintons were somehow involved in Foster's death.

As for using lawyers and the courts to drag the population into a political crisis, this sums up aptly the role of the *Wall Street Journal* itself. The newspaper backed a small army of right-wing lawyers in numerous legal provocations, most notoriously the Paula Jones suit. It functioned as the public mouthpiece and behind-the-scenes adviser of the cabal of reactionaries who ultimately came together in the Monica Lewinsky scandal, Kenneth Starr investigation and Republican impeachment drive.

The *Journal*, which dismisses as irrelevant the fact that its man, Bush, lost the popular vote last Tuesday, for eight years justified its seditious activities on the grounds that the Clinton administration was illegitimate, since Clinton's electoral pluralities never reached 50 percent.

Can anyone doubt what the *Journal*, and the bulk of the media, would be saying today if the Republicans had won the popular vote and Gore was claiming the presidency on the basis of a margin of victory in Florida of 327 votes? They would be demanding congressional hearings, special investigators and the issuing of blanket subpoenas to block an illicit power grab.



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